House Probe Of Watergate Bugging Blocked

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The House Banking and Currency Committee voted 20 to 15 yesterday against holding public hearings on financial questions raised by the bugging of the Democrats' Watergate headquarters.

All 14 Republicans in attendance, four Southern Democrats and two other Democrats voted against committee chairman Wright Patman's request for the hearings, thus apparently ending any chance of a full airing of the celebrated case before election day.

Representative Gary Brown (Rep-Mich.), the key figure in engineering the defeat, acknowledged in an interview that he worked with the Justice Department and Representative Gerald R. Ford (Rep-Mich.), the House minority leader, to block the hearings.

Brown denied a charge by Patman that the White House brought "all kinds of pressure," but added: "I would have to presume that the White House wouldn't want further attention paid to this. I'm not so stupid to have to be told."

Patman, a 79-year-old Texas Democrat, apparently anticipated yesterday's defeat and issued a prepared statement immediately after the vote:

"I predict," Patman said, "that the facts will come out, and when they do I am convinced they will reveal why the White House was so anxious to kill the committee's investigation. The public will fully understand why this pressure was mounted."

Chappell, it was learned, visited the White House last week and had his photograph taken with the President.

Chappell's press aide said the President had placed no restriction on using the photo during the Congressman's upcoming campaign.

After spearheading the successful opposition yesterday, Brown said if Patman actually wanted to win, he would not have submitted a list of 40 individuals and firms to be subpoenaed.

"Patman would not have come up with a list from hell to breakfast if he was serious... that was the best way to kill it. He couldn't have done more harm himself."

The list of 40 dipped into every corner of the White House and the Nixon re-election committee, calling for the sworn testimony of some of the President's top aides.

Three Californians are on the committee. Democrat Thomas M. Rees voted for the probe and Democrat Richard T. Hanna voted against it as did Republican John H. Rousselot.